

# On the effectiveness of emotion regulation training on adolescents' creativity and responsibility-taking in Kermanshah

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of emotion regulation training on creativity and the responsibility components, i.e., self-management, discipline and law-abiding in adolescents in Kermanshah. One of the main concerns of parents is irresponsibility in adolescents, that if solved, one can pave the way for academic achievement and increase empowerment in adolescents in the later stages of their lives. **Methods:** The statistical population of the study consisted of all adolescent students aged 12-18 years in the academic year of 2018-2019 in Kermanshah. The sample in the present study was 30 selected via a multi-stage random cluster, as they were placed into two experimental and control groups. The Gross' Emotion Regulation Training Protocol was used for eight sessions before administering the protocol. Following that, the tools used in this study were: Nemati Responsibility Scale (2008) with 50 questions and Abedi Creativity Questionnaire (2004) with 75 questions. These inventories were used to assess the participants and finally the results were analyzed by covariance test with SPSS-23 software. The significance level of the tests was 0.05. **Results:** The results demonstrated that emotion regulation training can increase creativity and responsibility in adolescents and this effect was significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level. **Conclusion:** According to the findings of this study, one can argue that emotion regulation training in schools along with curriculum training should be offered to adolescents so that their level of creativity and responsibility increase.

**Keywords:** emotion regulation training, creativity, responsibility, adolescents.

## Introduction

Adolescence is viewed one of the most critical periods of one's life. Entering this new stage makes the teenager encounter many difficulties. Now, if the factors affecting the personality are formed in such a way as to assist him/her in identity-making process, acute problems will not arise, but if these factors are found to aggravate the crisis, the susceptible and vulnerable adolescent will lead to abnormality or delinquency<sup>[1]</sup>. Responsibility is a personality trait that usually takes shape as an attitude in the individual's psychological and behavioral structure and is considered too be a fundamental variable in

social behaviors; therefore, it has an interesting status in the social behaviors training. Responsibility-taking in the individual and social dimensions is a concept that can be a good tool to maintain social cohesion while respecting and understanding existing differences<sup>[2]</sup>.

In general, responsibility-taking is divided into two parts: individual responsibility-taking and social responsibility-taking. Individual responsibility denotes that the individual takes responsibility for him/herself, the situation in which s/he finds him/herself, as well as for the needs and well-being of others<sup>[3]</sup>.

However, the basic idea behind social responsibility for adolescents is to recognize that they are part of the society and that they must participate in social ideals and goals<sup>[4]</sup>. Adolescence is a valuable time to learn social responsibility, because it is during this period that one wants to gain more independence and must make decisions about some of his/her values and behaviors. One of the main factors that can strengthen adolescents' choices is the extent of their responsibility in personal and social affairs. It is only through

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knowledge of the reasons for the choice and the will to accept responsibility for this choice that individuals can seek to change the circumstances, ideas and outcomes, otherwise the attempt to change will render meaningless, causing the person to feel powerless and passive to make corrections in their life<sup>[5]</sup>.

To define the word "emotion", one can say emotion is a special inner emotional state that is usually based on interpretations; i.e., a set of internal physiological changes that mentally help to restore balance between the organism and the environment. There are different behavior patterns evoked through the environment, suggesting a mutual and endurable relationship with the environment. These behavioral patterns indicate an aroused physiological state and a disturbed mental state<sup>[6]</sup>. Today, as it is clear that human beings are apparently made of a set of organs such as hands, feet, heart, etc., they also enjoy a set of invisible inner processes mentally, of which one can refer to emotion. Knowledge of this latent world, albeit little, can help us improve our material and spiritual lives, including social interactions. In recent years, the issue of emotions has been focused attention. Emotion exists as a constant companion of the individual because as different events unfold, different emotions such as happiness, surprise with anger, sadness, jealousy and embarrassment are evoked<sup>[7]</sup> as these emotions in turn affect thoughts and actions. of people in other life situations (Frederickson, 1998; quoted by Liu, 2006)<sup>[8]</sup>. One may argue that discussion over emotion in the Industrial Era, where most attention was directed at economic returns, was ignored, while in recent years, emotion has found a prominent place in the literature on psychology. What is of importance about emotion is the way emotion is regulated and handled. In the organizational literature, emotion regulation refers to people's efforts to regulate emotions according to environmental expectations<sup>[9]</sup>. Since adolescents are thought of as future makers of the society and any research in the field of these individuals lead to developing the society as a whole, and help improve the lifestyle of the Iranian society, one would say the conduct of this research can offer practical guidelines. According to the findings of previous research stating problem solving training was an effective way to improve self-esteem and self-efficacy among adolescents, the results of this study are also expected to demonstrate the effectiveness of this training in such responsibility-taking components as self-management, discipline and law-abiding.

Considering the fact that problem-solving training has not been studied in the current research community, it is hoped that the findings of this study would be offer help in helping select an approach appropriate to the local culture. If these trainings are found to be effective, one can apply the trainings in counseling centers and welfare centers for parents to improve their lifestyles and problem-solving components. Psychologists and education scholars posit that the issue of creativity is an important issue, as Socrates believed the objective of education was to develop the thinking power in man. All of creativity and

innovation is today influenced by the training of this latent force. In today's society, to have creative and innovative people is vital. One of the main tasks for adolescents is to learn to regulate emotion in adaptive methods without adults offering help<sup>[10]</sup>. Changes in biological, cognitive, and social systems during adolescence provide emotional situations that can lead to increased perceptions of stress, increased negative emotional experiences, and emotional instability<sup>[11]</sup>.

Creativity is one of the thorniest concepts ever raised about human beings. Today's complex life is being shaped every moment and creativity is thought of a necessity to persist with an active life. For vitality and dynamism, man needs creativity and initiative to both satisfy his/her motivation for diversity and to provide the ground for flourishing his/her talents and abilities. One can suggest that creativity tends to be defined in relation to the concepts of novelty and usefulness. That is, the novelty and usefulness of an idea or product is accepted as a key feature of creativity.

In their study on the effect of acceptance and commitment therapy on students, Tohing, Hayes and Mesuda (2014) concluded that participants saw their cognitive and behavioral flexibility decrease following eight sessions of acceptance and commitment therapy, while in subsequent experiences with the environment, they were found to act with a sense of responsibility and more enthusiasm, thereby easily accepting the cognitive and emotional dimensions of the experience .

Since adolescents are the future makers of the society, any research in the field of these future makers leads to the development of the country and provides the basis for improving the lifestyle of Iranian society, so the researcher aimed to study this research community.

Study results by Hayes and Lilis in 2014 on the effectiveness of acceptance and commitment therapy techniques and practices on adolescents' behavioral disorders demonstrated that applying acceptance and commitment therapy-based interventions and practices would significantly strengthen their level of responsibility and conscientiousness towards their behaviors. The findings also indicated that their behavioral problems were significantly reduced when acceptance of a sense of responsibility in adolescents was increased<sup>[12]</sup>.

Werner et al. (2011) demonstrated that people with social creativity disorders use avoidance and emotional suppression as emotion regulation strategies more than the control group does, but both groups use the same level of reassessment strategy. Emotion regulation is thus found to play an important role in our adaptation to stressful life events. A review of the literature on psychological studies suggests that emotion regulation is an important factor in determining health and having a successful performance in social interactions. For instance, signs of emotion regulation failure occur in more than half of Axis I disorders and in all Axis II personality disorders. Findings also indicate that the capacity of individuals to effectively regulate

emotions affects psychological happiness, physical health and interpersonal relationships as well as social interactions.

Kiani et al. (2012) conducted a study to investigate the effectiveness of group cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy on consumption craving and cognitive emotion regulation in Shisheh consumers. The findings demonstrated that acceptance and commitment therapy would significantly reduce the amount of craving as it improves the level of responsibility of these people towards their lives <sup>[13]</sup>.

Ardobadi and Mohammadi Soureh (2017) investigated the effect of cognitive regulation strategies on high-risk behaviors of adolescents and young people <sup>[14]</sup>. The findings suggested a negative relationship between adaptive strategies (self-blame, re-focus on planning and positive reassessment) and high-risk behaviors, while a positive relationship was noted between negative strategies (self-blame, rumination and catastrophizing) and high-risk behaviors.

Research by Salehi et al. (2012), while comparing the effectiveness of emotion regulation strategies training based on Gross model and dialectical behavior therapy in reducing the emotional problems, suggested that both therapies equally reduce the symptoms of interpersonal sensitivity <sup>[15]</sup>. Neither method was able to affect hostility, while only dialectical behavioral therapy managed to reduce depression.

Aldo and Hoxima (2010) demonstrated that negative cognitive emotion regulation strategies (rumination and suppression) were more strongly associated with creativity and depression compared to positive strategies (reassessment and problem solving) <sup>[16]</sup>.

Emotion regulation plays an important role in our adaptation to stressful life events. A review of the literature on psychology shows that emotion regulation is an important factor in determining health and having a successful performance in social interactions. For example, symptoms of emotion regulation failure occur in more than half of Axis I disorders and in all Axis II personality disorders. Study findings show that the capacity of individuals to effectively regulate emotions affects psychological happiness, physical health and interpersonal relationships as well as social interactions. Thus, concerning the importance of emotion regulation and considering the efficiency and effectiveness of adolescents' responsibility-taking components (i.e., self-management, discipline and law-abiding), the present study began to investigate the effect of training emotion regulation on creativity and its components.

## Methods

The quasi-experimental research design included a pretest-posttest framework with a control group. In this study, the independent variable was training emotion regulation skills.

Dependent variables included components of responsibility. The experimental group gave answers to the questions in two stages of pre-test and post-test. The statistical population consisted of all adolescent students in the academic year of 2018-2019 in Kermanshah. The sample size was 30 people based on the sample size formula. The research sample was randomly selected via a multi-stage cluster and based on lottery, it was divided into two experimental (15 people) and control (15 people) groups. Criteria for inclusion in the study were to voluntarily participate in the study, being a student, age of adolescence, not having a specific physical or mental illness, and the exclusion criteria were receiving simultaneous medication or other psychological intervention, absence for more than 2 sessions from research intervention sessions.

In this study, Nemati Responsibility Scale (2008) was utilized to collect data. This scale was developed by Nemati in 2007 and was standardized for the first time in Iran by Nemati (2008). The reliability of the questionnaire was 0.87 <sup>[17]</sup>.

Abedi Creativity Questionnaire (1993) was also used, which has 75 questions. Internal consistency and Cronbach's alpha were used to evaluate the reliability <sup>[18]</sup>. The coefficients were reported to be 0.75 for test fluidity, 0.67 innovation, and 0.61 resilience. Main component methods were used to estimate the degree of test content coordination in each section. Test content in all four sections was found to have a relatively high correlation between 0.55 and 0.85 with the first latent variable <sup>[19]</sup>.

The Gross' model-based emotion regulation training protocol <sup>[20]</sup>, which is a proposed method for emotion regulation training, was utilized as a study intervention for the experimental group. This protocol was constructed by James Gross and was used to train how to manage and regulate people's emotions. Different stages of emotion regulation training were done in eight 90-minute sessions collectively, based on the package mentioned in this study.

## Administering the method

Both participants in the experimental and control groups were pre-tested and then the members of the experimental group received eight sessions of emotion regulation intervention based on the Gross' emotion regulation protocol, whereas the participants in the control group did not receive any intervention in this regard. After that, both groups were posttested and data were analyzed using SPSS-23 software. Descriptive and inferential statistical indicators were used to analyze the data and test hypotheses. In descriptive statistics, mean, standard deviation indices and in inferential statistics, analysis of covariance and Levene's test were used to evaluate the consistency of variances.

Table 1- Emotion Regulation Training Protocol Sessions

Session One	Group members get to know with each other, the logic and stages of intervention as well as the framework and rules of participating in the group are discussed
Session Two	The situation is chosen, emotional training is provided, emotions and motivating situations are considered through training on performance difference relating to emotions, a daily note-taking card on emotional states are offered.
Session Three	Assessing the degree of emotional vulnerability and emotional skills of the members; including three sections: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Self-appraisal aimed at recognizing one's emotional experiences</li> <li>2) Self-appraisal aimed at identifying one's vulnerability levels and</li> <li>3) Self-appraisal aimed at identifying one's regulation strategies</li> </ol>
Session Four	Changes to emotion-arousing situation are made, personal, social and relational goals are listed, one's relations with others are investigated, personal and interpersonal relations are identified to be improved, positive activities are listed, required skills are trained for solving interpersonal problems, interpersonal skills are trained, i.e., such skills as dialogue, self-assertiveness and conflict solution
Session Five	Attention is shifted and rumination and worries are ceased, members discuss their own emotional experiences, problems and barriers to applying skills and utilizing new dialogue skills, completed forms are analyzed, Gross' emotion regulation process model is introduced to the members, emotion regulation stages are discussed.
Session Six	Cognitive assessments are changed and marketing strategies are trained, members get to know about the way attention shift is applied, barriers to work are reviewed, each person talks about his/her own skills to do things and in the end, members' successes are confirmed by the others.
Session Seven	Behavioral and physiological emotional outcomes are changed, members talk about the application of mind control skills and reassessment, methods and barriers to work are discussed, each person talks about his/her own skills to do things and in the end, members' successes are applauded by the others.
Session Eight	Reassessment is done and barriers to work are eliminated. Each expresses his or her own experience of implementing the skills learned. Obstacles and difficulties in implementing the skills are discussed and finally the success of the members is applauded and acknowledged.

## Data and Findings

The difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in the self-management, discipline and law-abiding scales in the pre-test stage was insignificant, while in the post-test stage the difference in mean pre-test and post-test between the experimental and control groups was significant. This indicated the effectiveness of the independent variable (emotion regulation training) on the level of self-management, discipline and law-abiding, while in the control group, the mean did not change significantly (Table 2).

Using parametric tests requires observing several basic assumptions, which, if met and confirmed, the tests can be applied. Considering that the method used in this study was of an analysis of covariance, one of the most important of these assumptions included the normal distribution of scores and homogeneity of variances, which were examined at the beginning of the hypotheses.

Shapiro test values for the variables of creativity, self-management, discipline and law-abiding were not significant in any of the pre-test and post-test stages in the experimental and control groups ( $P > 0.05$ ), so one can state that the distribution of scores in these two variables was normal (Table 3).

The F values, which indicate the value of the Levene's test to examine the homogeneity of variances of experimental and control groups, are not significant in any of the variables of creativity, self-management, discipline and law-abiding ( $P > 0.05$ ). According to this result, the presumption of equality of variances in the two experimental and control groups in variables creativity, self-management, discipline and law-abiding were met (Table 4).

Comparing the independent variable and the dependent variable indicates that the independent variable has a significant effect on creativity ( $F = 23.18$ ) at the  $P < 0.001$  level. The statistical power in the law-abiding variable is 99%. In other words, there is a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in terms of these variables (Table 5).

**Table 2- Mean and standard deviation of research variables for the two groups in pre-test and post-test**

Groups	Self-management		Discipline		Law-abiding		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Pretest	Control	25.13	2.26	20.53	2.06	33.33	4.73
	Experimental	25.67	2.74	19.60	2.06	35.40	4.86
Posttest	Control	25.80	2.14	21.87	1.80	36.87	3.20
	Experimental	29.93	3.15	25.53	2.44	42.80	3.21

**Table 3 -Shapiro test results to investigate the normality of the scores distribution**

Variable	Group	Group			
		Z value	Freedom degree	Sig.	
Creativity	Pretest	Control	0.74	15	0.14
		Experimental	0.61	15	0/21
	Posttest	Control	0.84	15	0.13
		Experimental	0.98	15	0.32
Self-management	Pretest	Control	0.89	15	0.06
		Experimental	0.91	15	0.33
	Posttest	Control	0.9	15	0.15
		Experimental	0.95	15	0.53
Discipline	Pretest	Control	0.88	15	0.05
		Experimental	0.92	15	0.32
	Posttest	Control	0.95	15	0.59
		Experimental	0.94	15	0.51
Law-abiding	Pretest	Control	0.95	15	0.54

	Experimental	0.90	15	0.12
Posttest	Control	0.95	15	0.65
	Experimental	0.98	15	0.99

**Table 4- Levene's test results: Investigation of homogeneity of variances**

Variable	F value	Freedom degree 1	Freedom degree2	Sig.
Creativity	2.23	1	28	0.16
Self-management	2.14	1	28	0.15
Discipline	1.99	1	28	0.16
Law-abiding	0.10	1	28	0.74

**Table 5- Covariance analysis of the effectiveness of emotion regulation on adolescents' creativity**

Sources of change	Sum of squares	Freedom degree	Mean sum of squares	F value	Sig.	Effect size	Statistical power
Pretest	21.37	1	41.37	2.32	0.092	0.06	0.25
Group	622.93	1	342.59	23.18	0.001	0.42	0.99
Error value	214.27	27	02.13				
Entire approach	324	30					

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the effect of emotion regulation training on adolescents' creativity and responsibility. The results indicated that emotion regulation training had increased creativity in adolescents, which are consistent with research results by Ardobadi et al. (2017), Abdi et al. (2010), Hayes and Lilis (2014) [12, 14, 21]. More creative people perform better at using emotion control skills than others who are less creative, and this can in itself be one of the factors affecting their academic achievement. People who enjoy the ability to regulate emotion more, their decision-making abilities and creativity increases as their emotional intelligence increases. As a result, one of the major skills before gaining creativity is the capacity to control positive and negative emotions, which is achieved by emotion regulation training.

Another finding of this study was the effectiveness of emotion regulation training on adolescents' responsibility-taking. Concerning the consistency of the findings, one can refer to the researches done by Ordobadi et al. (2017), Salehi et al. (2012), Samani and Sadeghi (2010), Kafsius (2004) [14, 15, 22, 23].

To explain the present study, it is worth noting that self-management was first introduced in the first half of the nineteenth century. Self-management does not seek to change attitudes and character, rather it seeks to control behavior and make changes to it if necessary; in other words, self-management results from social knowledge. It should be noted that self-management is an optional process, not an obligatory one. Put it differently, people get inclined to it on their own will and not under the coercion of others, so practicing it is not far from expectation and can be achieved. In Behavioral Sciences: Self-management implies recognizing and cultivating positive mental and psychological dimensions and traits, or recognizing and

eliminating negative psychological dimensions and traits in individuals [24]. It should be noted however that the independent variable of research, i.e., emotion regulation improves the level of self-management of the experimental group through trainings such as: making changes in emotion-arousing situation and training interpersonal skills, attention and ceasing rumination and worry, performing cognitive evaluations and training marketing strategy, behavioral consequences as well as physiological emotion regulation [14].

Consistent with the present research, Gillanders et al. (2014) concluded in their study that intervention measures such as acceptance and mindfulness, along with behavioral change and commitment strategies, help young people create a vibrant, purposeful, responsible and meaningful life for themselves [25]. The results by Forsith and Efort (2016) also demonstrated that developing a spirit of commitment and acceptance as well as concentration on emotions in people reduce their level of cognitive avoidance and helps create a life based on social values and social responsibility in them, ultimately increasing their performance in various social and individual areas [26].

One of the limitations of the research was the research tool. The questionnaire as a tool itself creates limitations in the research findings that results in such errors as dishonesty in answering based as the momentary feelings of the participants unfold. As well, the lack of a follow-up stage to examine the reliability of the findings obtained from the present study was another limitation. In the end, it is suggested that a follow-up step be done in future research. Education counseling services can provide emotion regulation courses to improve students' self-efficacy, health, and lifestyle, and to use emotion regulation training to increase students' creativity to lessen student stress and anxiety. As a result, they can have better capacities and skills to increase creativity.

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